

SOFT SWITCH USING DISTRIBUTED FIREWALLS FOR LOAD  
SHARING VOICE-OVER-IP TRAFFIC IN AN IP NETWORK

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

5 A switch capable of handling voice-over-IP (VoIP) traffic  
between calling devices and called devices. The switch comprises:  
1) call application nodes for executing call process server  
applications, wherein a first call process server application and a  
similar second call process server application form a first load  
sharing group server application; and 2) network address  
translation nodes for executing firewall server applications. A  
first firewall server application executed on a first network  
address translation node is associated with a similar second  
firewall server application executed on a second network address  
translation nodes separate from the first network address  
translation node. The first and second firewall server  
applications form a second load sharing group server application.  
The second load sharing group server application receives VoIP  
traffic and selects one of the first and second firewall server  
20 applications to verify that the VoIP traffic is authorized to  
access at least one of the call process server applications in the  
call application nodes according to a load distribution algorithm.